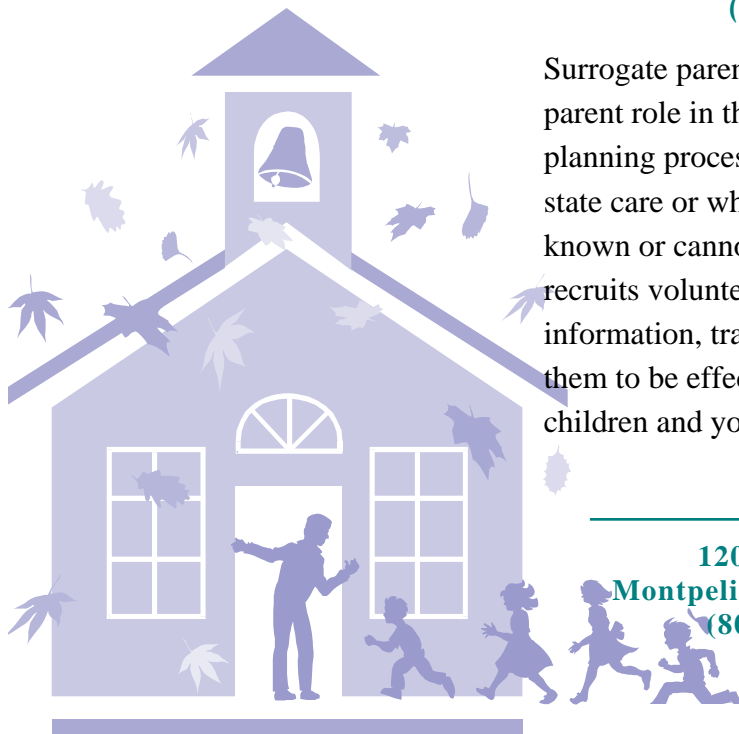



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ED 82
Educational Surrogate Parent Program
 Vermont Department of Education
 120 State Street
 Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

Vermont Department of Education & University of Vermont, Center on Disability and Community Inclusion

**VERMONT
 EDUCATIONAL
 SURROGATE
 PARENT
 PROGRAM**

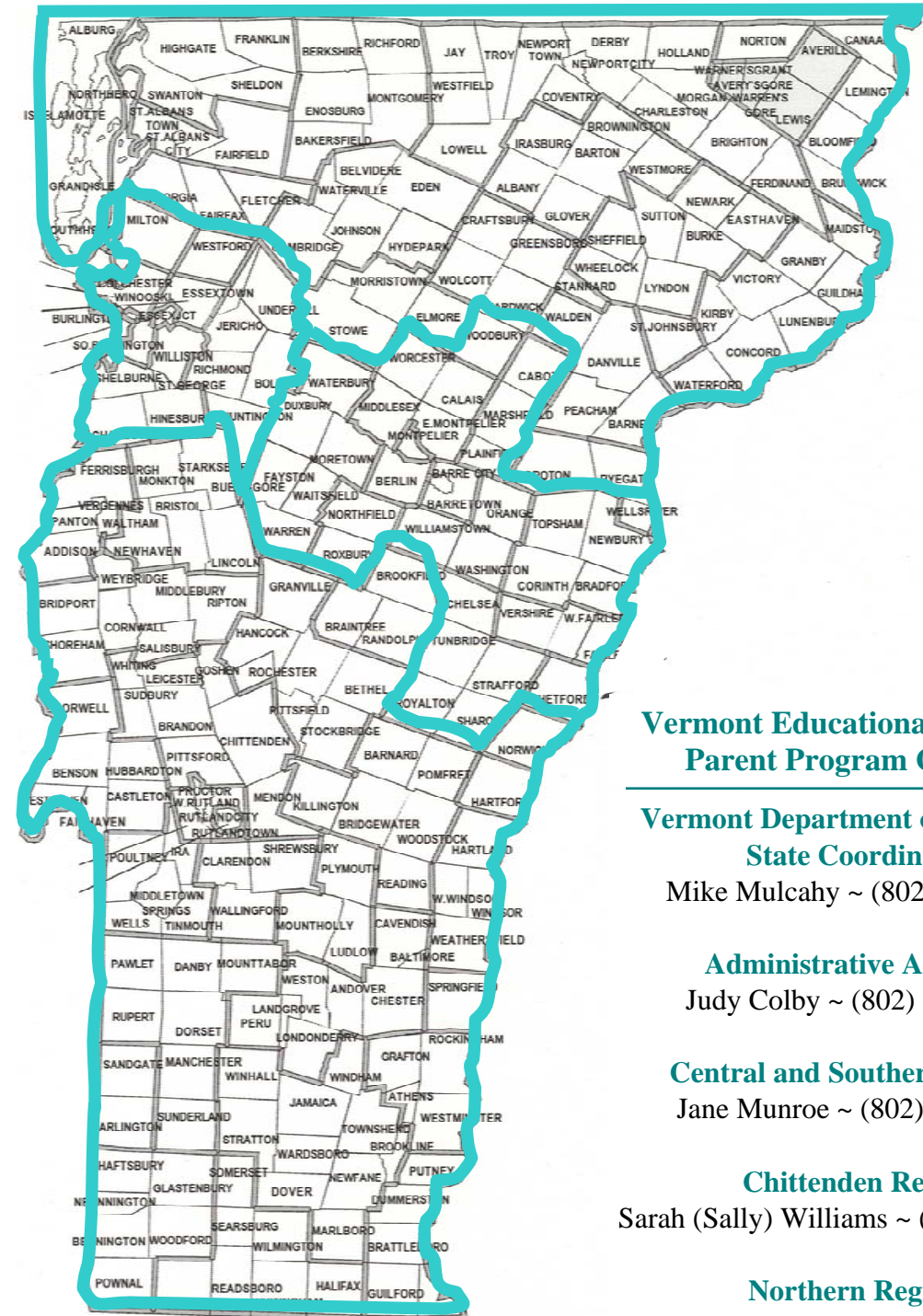


What is the Vermont Educational Surrogate Parent Program (VESPP)?

Surrogate parent volunteers fill the parent role in the special education planning process for students who are in state care or whose parents are not known or cannot be located. VESPP recruits volunteers and provides information, training and support for them to be effective advocates for the children and youth they represent.

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http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_interagency/surrogate_parent.html

Why is there an educational surrogate parent program?

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Vermont Special Education Rules and Regulations ensure that the educational rights of infants, toddlers and students are represented in the special education process. Parental involvement in planning a child's special education program is required by federal and state regulations.

When a child or youth is in state care or his or her parents cannot be located, a “surrogate parent” is appointed to represent the child as the parent participant in the special education planning process. An educational surrogate parent is assigned when a student is eligible for early intervention or special education or is being evaluated for eligibility and one of the following applies:

- The student is in the custody of the commissioner of VT Department for Children & Families, Division for Families and Children (DCF)
- The student is age 18 through age 22 and has a public guardian appointed by a Vermont Court
- The parents of the student are not known or cannot be located
- The student is an unaccompanied homeless youth as defined by the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act ((34 CFR 300.519 (a) (4))

Who are these children?

They are children and youth in care of the state through VT Department for Children and Families (DCF) or have a public guardian appointed. They also may be children whose parents are not known or cannot be located. They live in:

- Foster homes
- Group Homes
- Residential schools or treatment centers
- Correctional facilities
- At home with their birth or adoptive parents or relatives



They demonstrate a delay in learning or have a disability that affects their learning and need early intervention services or specialized instruction to meet their educational needs.



What are the responsibilities of the educational surrogate parent?

The educational surrogate parent becomes familiar with the student's educational needs, reads the student's education records and meets with the student's teachers and other team members to review evaluation information and develop the student's Individual Education Program (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP, which is for infants and toddlers). They attend meetings with the school team as needed to review the child's program and educational progress. Educational surrogate parents may also participate in the inter-agency planning process when there is a need to coordinate services. The actual amount of time involved varies depending on a student's needs.

What kind of assistance is available to educational surrogate parents?

VESPP staff members are available to:

- Answer questions
- Provide additional training and information
- Talk to school staff and other team members
- Attend school meeting with the educational surrogate parent when asked to do so



What is involved in training to become an educational surrogate parent?

Volunteers must attend a one to three hour training session led by a VESPP regional coordinator. Training sessions are informal and conducted in small groups or individually. Volunteers are given information regarding the special education process, available services and resources and parental rights and responsibilities as provided by law.



Who volunteers to be an educational surrogate parent?

Volunteers may be foster parents, a guardian ad litem, a student's family member or an individual from the community who is interested in assisting a student in need of representation in the special education process. Federal law does not allow an educational surrogate parent to be an employee of a public agency involved in the education or care of the child.